

# BBC BROADCASTING RESEARCH

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## TELEVISION AUDIENCE REACTION REPORT

From the BARB Audience Reaction Service

DOCTOR WHO

TV/84/43

Saturdays, 5th January - 30th March, 1985. 5.25 pm BBC-1

Producer: John Nathan-Turner

Average audience: 7.1m  
Series AI: 57  
SOURCE: BARB

- In Summary - There was a mixed and overall muted reaction to this, the latest series of Doctor Who.
- The series AI of 57 is lower than the average of 64 for the individual episodes, and both are lower than the average of 73 for UK Originated Drama - Series and Serials, Weeks 1-13, 1985.
  - Whilst the character of Doctor Who is generally considered likeable, the portrayal by Colin Baker is not so highly regarded.
  - The average audience size has remained consistent for the past three series.

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On Other Channels:

BBC-2	-	A season of films	Average audience 2.6m, AI 63
ITV	-	to Week 9 i) Regional variations	5.10-5.40 pm
		ii) The A-Team	5.40-6.40 pm (13.6m, AI 73)
		from Week 10)	
		i) Regional variations	5.10-5.40 pm
		ii) Robin of Sherwood	5.40-6.40 pm (10.9m, AI 71)
Ch 4	-	i) Brookside Omnibus	5.05-6.00 pm ( 2.4m. AI 78)
		ii) Other Side of the Tracks	6.00-7.00 pm ( 0.8m, AI 70)

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DOCTOR WHO (Continued)

Reactions in detail (a copy of the computer tabulation is attached; illustrative comment is drawn from viewers' open response).

1. Doctor Who received a mixed reaction from reporting viewers, as it has in previous years. There were those respondents who liked it a great deal, those who considered it dreadful and a substantial number (about one in four) who appeared to have no strong opinion about it at all.
2. 'I enjoy Doctor Who! Inventive stories with a blend of humour' and 'They were very much what I have come to expect and enjoy from Doctor Who. Interesting storylines which stand up to more detailed examination, containing interesting philosophical and moral arguments' were typical of the kinds of remark made by fans of the series. Just over 60% of the open comment was made by respondents favourable towards the episodes they had seen. Entertaining stories that were suitable for children and well acted were the qualities of Doctor Who that this section of the reporting audience liked.
3. Almost 40% of the volunteered comment was negative. Respondents in this group made remarks such as 'lacked variety in storylines, lacked quality in costumes', and 'poor acting and scenery - special effects are not as good as they used to be'. This section of the sample contained people who felt they had outgrown the series, those who felt the stories and production poor, and those who did not like the acting. Respondents most likely to fall into this group were under 34 years of age, and females.
4. One in five of the sample audience decided to stop watching the series at some point. 76% of those who indicated when said they did so after the first two episodes. The reasons they gave for ceasing to watch the series were varied, but tended to concentrate on what respondents regarded as its stupidity, boringness, repetitiveness and unoriginality. 5% of those volunteering comment said they had stopped watching because they did not like Colin Baker's portrayal of the Doctor.
5. When specifically asked to comment on the acting, and particularly that of Colin Baker as The Doctor and Nicola Bryant as Peri, respondents were split about half and half. For those who said 'I think Colin Baker plays the part of Doctor Who very well, Peri is a good assistant', others were ready with 'don't particularly like this Doctor Who and assistant'. While some claimed 'I think the whole cast do a marvellous job and I have great admiration for them - especially Doctor Who and Peri', or felt (in the words of one respondent) 'the standard of acting is extremely high' others countered with 'Colin Baker is pathetic' and 'I'm longing for the time Peri is exterminated by a Dalek'. Indeed Nicola Bryant received a moderate index of 59 overall, and was rated for less favourably by females than males. For one respondent, however, confusion was the biggest reaction: 'I think Doctor Who has been changed far too many times, and when I watch it I don't know who is who'.

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DOCTOR WHO (Continued)

6. It is perhaps illuminating to compare the summary indices obtained from the statements 'Doctor Who likeable character' and 'Well portrayed by ...' over the last three years, as the following table shows:

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>
Doctor Who likeable character	73	66	70
Well portrayed by ...	71	54	62

In 1983 Doctor Who was portrayed by Peter Davison, and was thought both likeable and well portrayed. In 1984 the character was again played by Peter Davison, until the final story, at which point Colin Baker took over the role. The 1984 figures relate to Colin Baker, and show a distinct drop in popularity both for the character and the portrayal of it. In many ways this is only to be expected. However, the 1985 figures (again for Colin Baker), while showing a marked improvement in appreciation for portrayal, are still well below the 1983 figure for Peter Davison.

7. When asked how often they liked to see Doctor Who, 50% replied that they had no strong opinion. However, the average audience for the programme for the last three years has been remarkably consistent. In 1983, when it was transmitted on Mondays and Wednesdays, it had an average audience of 7.0m; in 1984 it was transmitted on Thursdays and Fridays, with an average audience of 7.1m; while in 1985 (Saturday transmission and 45 as opposed to 25 minute episodes) the average audience was again 7.1m.
8. 34% of the sample said they wanted to see Doctor Who once a week, while 15% wanted to see it twice a week. In contrast, in response to the same question in 1984, the sample audience for that series replied with 17% in favour of once a week, 36% in favour of twice a week, and 47% having no strong opinion. Leaving aside those with no strong opinion, it is clear that respondents expressing a preference tend to go along with the status quo: Doctor Who was transmitted weekly in 1985 and twice-weekly in 1984.
9. 56% of respondents wanted to see another series of Doctor Who. Males, those under the age of 34, and those in social grades ABC1 were the most keen. This figure compares well with the 57% who wished for another series in 1983 and the 55% who replied in the affirmative in 1984. However, as the table below indicates, there seems to be a slight shift from those who have no strong opinion on the matter to those who positively reply 'No'.

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DOCTOR WHO (Continued)

Would you like to see a further series of Doctor Who?

	1983 %	1984 %	1985 %
Yes	57	55	56
No	14	16	19
No strong opinion	29	29	25

10. Altogether Doctor Who continued to get a muted and mixed response from its reporting viewers. Its audience size and average AI have remained fairly consistent for the past three years, although its AI (whether series or average) is always less than the average of its genre. For most of the rating scales on the questionnaire the appreciation has remained constant over the last three years, except in the case of the character of Doctor Who and the way it is portrayed. Initially Colin Baker was not popular in the role, but even during the course of the current season has failed to achieve the same heights of popularity as Peter Davison.

Report prepared by Clive Graham (LBH 7956)  
JB

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! BOOKLET PART C !  
! PROGRAMME CODE: 904 !

! DOCTOR WHO !  
! 5.20PM SATS.5TH JAN-30TH.MAR !  
! BBC-1 !

! RESPONDENT BASE: 597 !

REACTION PROFILE					
STRONGLY					STRONGLY
AGREE <					> DISAGREE
5	4	3	2	1	
%	%	%	%	%	

SUMMARY  
INDEX

SEX		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE		
M	F	12-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE

SEE ANY PROGRAMMES IN THIS SERIES

YES  
NO

47%  
53%

HOW MANY OF THE THIRTEEN PROGRAMMES DID YOU SEE

ONE OR TWO  
ABOUT HALF  
ALL OR MOST

49%  
25%  
27%

DECIDE NOT TO WATCH ANY MORE PROGRAMMES

YES  
NO

20%  
80%

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%	%	%	%	%

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SEX		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE		
M	F	12-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE

SERIES ENTERTAINING	17	46	23	9	5	65	68	62	65	63	70	66	63	66
STORYLINES GENERALLY GOOD	10	45	26	13	6	59	61	59	58	60	68	61	59	59
PRODUCTION GOOD	16	49	23	7	5	66	67	66	64	70	73	68	64	67
TRANSMISSION TIME CONVENIENT FOR ME	14	35	28	15	8	58	59	56	56	58	64	57	57	60
DOCTOR WHO IS A CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME	18	25	23	23	11	53	49	59	49	59	63	50	56	58
PROVIDES ENTERTAINMENT FOR WHOLE FAMILY	19	39	21	14	7	62	64	59	61	62	64	62	62	62
DOCTOR WHO LIKEABLE CHARACTER	17	54	20	6	3	70	70	69	68	70	77	71	69	70
WELL PORTRAYED BY COLIN BAKER	14	44	23	13	6	62	63	61	60	65	69	62	60	66
NICOLA BRYANT (PERI) GOOD	13	38	29	13	7	59	64	53	59	58	64	58	60	61
THE REST OF CAST GOOD	7	49	34	8	2	63	66	60	62	62	71	63	63	64
DOCTOR WHO SHOULD BE														

MORE FRIGHTENING	18%	21%	14%	23%	11%	6%	18%	15%	20%
LESS FRIGHTENING	7%	3%	11%	5%	8%	11%	4%	8%	9%
FRIGHTENING AS NOW	35%	38%	34%	34%	41%	35%	39%	34%	33%
NO STRONG OPINION	40%	38%	42%	38%	41%	48%	38%	43%	38%

HOW OFTEN DO YOU LIKE TO SEE DOCTOR WHO?

ONCE A WEEK	34%	34%	37%	36%	33%	40%	41%	33%	28%
TWICE A WEEK	15%	21%	9%	18%	11%	10%	13%	16%	19%
NO STRONG OPINION	50%	45%	55%	46%	56%	51%	46%	51%	53%

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5	4	3	2	1
%	%	%	%	%

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SEX		AGE			SOCIAL GRADE		
M	F	12-34	35-54	55+	ABC1	C2	DE

LIKE TO SEE A FURTHER SERIES

YES	56%	62%	48%	58%	53%	53%	59%	55%	53%
NO	19%	17%	21%	18%	18%	23%	20%	17%	20%
NO STRONG OPINION	25%	20%	31%	23%	29%	24%	21%	29%	28%

OVERALL EPISODES WATCHED

EXTREMELY INT/ENJOY	10%	12%	8%	12%	5%	14%	10%	7%	16%
VERY INT/ENJOY	22%	26%	18%	23%	22%	19%	24%	20%	22%
FAIRLY INT/ENJOY	37%	37%	36%	34%	39%	42%	37%	41%	30%
NEITHER ONE/OTHER	12%	9%	16%	11%	15%	10%	13%	11%	12%
NOT VERY INT/ENJOY	9%	9%	10%	9%	11%	6%	9%	11%	6%
NOT AT ALL INT/ENJOY	10%	8%	12%	11%	7%	9%	7%	10%	13%

SERIES AT

57	60	53	57	55	60	58	54	58
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